

LOS ANGELES

CONSERVANCY

news

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Bob's Big Boy in Downey reopened in October after extensive reconstruction following its illegal partial demolition in early 2007. Photo by John Eng.

Johnie's Broiler Reopens as Bob's Big Boy

by Mike Buhler

The Broiler is back! Nearly three years after its partial demolition, the original Harvey's Broiler, and longtime Johnie's Broiler, reopened in its third incarnation as Bob's Big Boy Broiler in October 2009. The Broiler's comeback is nothing short of miraculous, standing as a testament to the tireless efforts of the Coalition to Rebuild the Broiler, the City of Downey, franchise owner Jim Louder, Modern Committee chair emeritus Adriene Biondo, and others who work to ensure its resurrection.

When it opened in 1958, Harvey's Broiler was the largest drive-in ever built in Southern California. It quickly became an integral part of the region's cruising culture. The combination coffee shop/drive-in restaurant featured a boomerang-shaped car canopy with ninety-eight covered parking spaces. The restaurant was sold in 1965, and the new owner renamed it Johnie's Broiler.

On December 31, 2001, its owner closed the Broiler and leased it to a new tenant who operated it as a used car lot. This period saw several unauthorized alterations to the building, including the dismantling of the kitchen, removal of the counter seating, and removal of portions of the terrazzo floors.

The final blow came on January 7, 2007, when a rag-tag wrecking crew started bulldozing without permits, fencing off the property, disconnecting the electricity, or completing asbestos abatement. Only a portion of the front facade and its distinctive signage, including the famous "Fat Boy" mascot, remained.

After intense public outcry, the Downey City Council moved quickly to impose a year-long development moratorium on the site. Spurred by the city's commitment of \$900,000 toward the reconstruction project, Bob's Big Boy franchise owner Jim Louder entered into a long-term lease in April 2008 with

Please see JOHNIE'S on page 6

Demolition Underway at Columbia Savings Building

by Marcello Vavala

At press time, demolition had begun on the 1965 Columbia Savings Building at 5220 Wilshire Boulevard. Despite more than a year of intensive advocacy, the Conservancy did not prevail in our efforts to preserve this important example of postwar bank design.

On Friday, December 4, the Los Angeles City Council voted to certify the environmental impact report (EIR) for the Wilshire and La Brea Project, a large mixed-use project whose development called for the demolition of the Columbia Savings Building.

Knowing that the certification of the EIR was likely, the Conservancy had submitted a letter to the City Council before the meeting, asking for a condition on the certification that would require the issuance of building permits for the new project before allowing demolition of the Columbia Savings Building. This would safeguard against the building's pre-emptive demolition and the very real potential that the site could remain vacant indefinitely, given the current economic climate.

Staff from the Conservancy attended the December 4 meeting to reiterate our request for this condition. A number of Conservancy supporters and community members also attended the meeting to voice their concerns. Unfortunately, no one had the opportunity to address the Council. The agenda item was quickly voted on—and passed—with no public discussion, despite speaker request cards submitted at the beginning of the meeting. Preliminary demolition of the Columbia Savings Building began within hours of the EIR's certification.

This issue underscores the plight of buildings from our recent past that are not yet fully

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The Los Angeles Conservancy is a nonprofit membership organization that works through education and advocacy to recognize, preserve, and revitalize the historic architectural and cultural resources of Los Angeles County.

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Thanks to the Getty Research Institute for access to the Julius Shulman photography archive.

Recruit Members for a Chance to Win VIP Last Remaining Seats Tickets!

As a member of the Conservancy, you continue to make the organization a driving force for preservation in Los Angeles. You provide the strength in numbers that is crucial to influencing decision-makers on public policy and preservation issues. You also provide more than a third of the Conservancy's operating funds. Simply stated, members are absolutely essential to our success.

Our members are also our most valuable ambassadors. When you talk to your friends and colleagues about our shared mission, your passion inspires others. That's why we're asking for your help in our 2010 membership drive.

From now until April 30, 2010, each time you recruit a new Conservancy member or purchase a new gift membership, we will enter you into a drawing for two VIP reserved seats at a 2010 Last Remaining Seats screening! We will draw six names for LRS tickets. While you can only win one pair of tickets, you can enter the drawing an unlimited number of times. The more members you recruit, or gift memberships you purchase, the more chances you have to win! Don't miss this chance to help strengthen the Conservancy's foundation—and enjoy the best seats in the house at our most popular event.

You already provide critical support to the Conservancy through your annual membership. By encouraging new members, you will help expand our influence and impact on the community. To guarantee your entry into the Last Remaining Seats drawing, be sure to use this page (and tell your friends to): <http://lac.laconservancy.org/drive>.

If you have any questions about the membership drive, please contact Abby Matthews, membership assistant, at amatthews@laconservancy.org or (213) 430-4201. Thank you!

Preservation Award Nominations Due February 1

Do you know of a preservation project that deserves special recognition? If so, we welcome your nominations for the Conservancy's 29th Annual Preservation Awards. Presented each May during National Preservation Month, these awards recognize outstanding achievement in the field of historic preservation. Winners are selected by an independent jury of leading experts in architecture, historic preservation, and community development.

Preservation Award winners range widely, from sensitive restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse projects, to groundbreaking advocacy and education efforts by individuals and groups. We encourage submissions from throughout Los Angeles County that illustrate the value and power of historic preservation. Past recipients include Cole's, Originators of the French Dip; Valley Municipal Building; and Rose Towers in Long Beach.

Projects must have been completed by December 31, 2009, and be located in L.A. County. Construction projects may be commercial, residential, or institutional. Historic landscape projects, as well as contributions to preservation education or program development, are also encouraged.

The deadline for submitting nominations is **Monday, February 1, 2010**. Each nomination has a non-refundable application fee of \$50. You can download a nomination form from our website at laconservancy.org or request one by calling the office at (213) 623-2489.

Receive Conservancy News Via E-Mail

Are you trying to cut back on paper mail? If so, you can receive *Conservancy News* by e-mail, as an Adobe PDF document. This is an easy step you can take to continue receiving the same members-only content you currently do, but electronically. It will look exactly the same, and you can print it at home if you'd like. You'd also be helping us reduce printing and mailing expenses, making your membership dollars go even further. This is a completely optional offer that in no way will affect members who enjoy receiving the newsletter in print. To begin receiving *Conservancy News* by e-mail instead of regular mail, please e-mail news@laconservancy.org or call (213) 623-2489. Please provide your name, phone number, and the e-mail address at which you'd like to receive the newsletter. Thank you!

Preservation Issues in the News

by Mike Buhler, Flora Chou, Karina Muñiz, and Marcello Vavala

Wyvernwood Garden Apartments

The Conservancy continues to support residents in their efforts to protect the Wyvernwood Garden Apartments in Boyle Heights. Completed in 1939, Wyvernwood was the first large-scale garden apartment complex in Los Angeles.

The seventy-plus-acre complex is threatened with demolition for a proposed 4,400-unit mixed-use project that would quadruple the site's density and diminish Wyvernwood's historic layout and park-like setting. Residents have opposed the complex's demolition, attesting to the close-knit community and family ties spanning generations that have shaped Wyvernwood's unique sense of place.

Between May and November 2009, residents developed multimedia oral histories documenting the cultural significance and preservation efforts at Wyvernwood. They worked with resident group Comité de la Esperanza, the Conservancy, and LA CO MEDIA, a media collective that helps communities record and share their own stories.

On December 3, residents presented their projects at "Wyvernwood: Our Histories, Our Future." Produced with grant support from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the event drew approximately 200 attendees. It began at Wyvernwood, with a gathering of residents, supporters, dancers, and musicians. After a procession through the complex to nearby Costello Recreation Center, the group viewed the multimedia projects and described what Wyvernwood means to them. For more information, visit laconservancy.org.

Michael White Adobe

On October 27, the San Marino school board voted to certify the final environmental impact report (EIR) for the Michael White Adobe project, despite many flaws in the EIR as well as impassioned pleas from residents and the preservation community. However, in lieu of approving demolition of the 164-year-old adobe, which sits on the San Marino High School campus, the board voted to appoint a task force to explore options.

The Conservancy was invited to sit on the task force along with community members experienced in adobes, preservation, and fundraising. The task force is expected to report back to the board in three months, and again in six months, at which time the district will reconsider project approval.



This drawing, by Wyvernwood resident Juan Bacio, won first place in a contest among youth to depict what Wyvernwood means to them.

The community turned out in force at the school board hearing. About fifteen local residents,

including preservation advocates, parents, and a high school student, offered compelling and eloquent testimony on the educational potential of the adobe and the responsibility of the school board to set a good example for its students. The Conservancy made a separate presentation on successful adobe restoration projects throughout the state, potential funding sources, and models for ownership and operation, which was followed by strong testimony from our pro bono attorney at Gibson, Dunn and Crutcher.

While the adobe is temporarily spared from demolition, it remains in jeopardy. With a certified EIR, the school board may approve the demolition project at any time, unless an acceptable solution can be reached.



Scaffolding goes up around the Columbia Savings Building in preparation for its demolition. Photo by Larry Underhill.

COLUMBIA SAVINGS continued from page 1

understood or appreciated. The Sixties Turn 50 program by the Conservancy and our Modern Committee is building awareness of our rich legacy of 1960s architecture, but we clearly have far to go.

The December 4 City Council showing also underscored the power of each individual voice for historic preservation. While we did not get to enter public comment into the record or before the full City Council, those who had intended to speak did have the chance to meet privately with Councilmember Tom LaBonge (in whose district the project will take place). We'd specifically like to thank Sharon Eastman, Toby Horn, Steven Luftman, Annie Morrissey, Regina O'Brien, and Tony Villanueva for attending the meeting and voicing your concerns to Councilmember LaBonge.

Despite the ultimate outcome of the meeting, you sent a clear message that Angelenos want, need, and deserve protection of our historic resources. It is up to all of us to defend our architectural heritage, and we greatly appreciate your time and dedication.

For background and updates on this issue, visit laconservancy.org.



LAX Theme Building. Photo from LAC archives.

People's Choice Top Ten Civic/ Institutional Buildings

Thank you to everyone who participated in our first voting category—Civic/Institutional—for the “People’s Choice” top sixty of the sixties. The votes are in, and the LAX Theme Building took the lead by a landslide with 236 votes! Listed below are the top ten in order of popularity.

LAX Theme Building
Los Angeles Department of Water
and Power Building
Los Angeles County Music Center
Norton Simon Museum
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Ambassador College
Lokrantz Special Education Center
Los Angeles County Hall of Records
Robert L. Frost Memorial
Auditorium at Culver City H.S.
Glendale Municipal Services
Building

For more information about these buildings and to vote for other building categories, visit laconservancy.org/sixties.

“The Sixties Turn 50” Continues with Residential Tour, Online Activities, and More

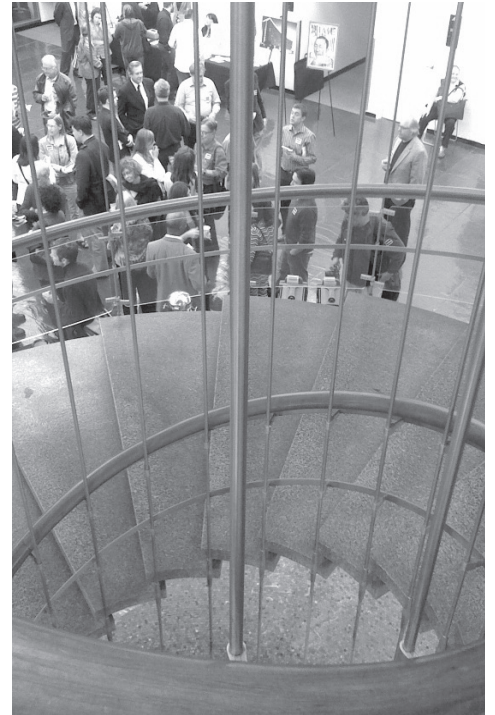
We’re three months into “The Sixties Turn 50,” a joint program by the Conservancy and our Modern Committee celebrating Greater Los Angeles’ rich legacy of 1960s architecture. The September 30 kickoff event at the 1965 Department of Water and Power building generated great discussion with an esteemed panel of experts, who delved into important issues in preserving sixties structures. The discussions continued the next day at a National Trust for Historic Preservation Modern Module roundtable with leaders in preservation.

“It’s a Mod, Mod, Mod, Mod City,” our November 8 tour of sixties sites in the South Bay, was a great success, with more than 500 attendees. Tourgoers explored the LAX Theme Building mid-restoration; the Flight Path Learning Center; Northrop Grumman Space Park (a bonus site and exclusive offering); and more. Many thanks to tour sponsors City National Bank, Los Angeles World Airports, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Foundation. Thanks also to the tour site owners, representatives, and tenants for their hospitality, and to the more than 100 dedicated volunteers who made the day possible. If you were unable to take the tour, you can purchase the tour booklet for \$10 at laconservancy.org.

We have even more in store. Mark your calendar for **March 14**, when our special spring tour explores a diverse range of residential architecture from the 1960s. While the sixties are known for innovative and often edgy designs, the era included everything from “glass box” Modern to California Ranch, and from Hollywood Regency to tract developments in the suburbs. We hope you’ll join us for this one-time-only tour.

In addition to learning more about the upcoming tour, remember that at our “Sixties Turn 50” web-

site (laconservancy.org/sixties), you can vote for your favorite 1960s buildings, suggest your own, and find out which sites have already been selected as part of the “People’s Choice” top sixty buildings of the sixties—decided by you! If you haven’t already, be sure to check out the 1960s timeline, an extensive collection of important local and national events in preservation and beyond. If you have photos of sixties sites you’d like to share, join our Flickr group, “The Sixties Turn Fifty.” And we’ll continue to post information about upcoming sixties-related events by the Conservancy and other organizations. For the latest, visit laconservancy.org/sixties.



“The Sixties Turn 50” kickoff reception at the Department of Water and Power Building. Photo by Chris Green.



“It’s a Mod, Mod, Mod, Mod City” tourgoers explore St. Jerome Catholic Church, an octagonal building and an exceptional example of ecclesiastical architecture. Photo by John Eng.

New Volunteer Committee Officers

Meet the newly minted officers of the Conservancy's volunteer committees for 2009–2010.

Modern Committee (ModCom)

Chair: Regina O'Brien
 Vice Chair: Michael Palumbo
 Commercial Chair: Charlie Fisher
 Residential Chair: Sarah Farris-Gilbert
 Education/Outreach Chair: Jay Lopez
 Membership Development Chair: Steven Kyle
 Secretary: Annie Morrissey



ModCom chair, Regina O'Brien.

Since 1984, members of the Modern Committee have been working to preserve Modern resources throughout L.A. County by researching and nominating buildings, holding fun events and tours, and more. The committee meets monthly (typically the third Monday) in a variety of interesting locations. New chair Regina O'Brien has been active with ModCom for many years. She most recently served as the Residential Chair, coordinating the nomination of the remaining Case Study houses to the National Register of Historic Places.



LEFT: A ModCom meeting at Synchronicity Gallery in March 2009. Photo by Larry Underhill. RIGHT: The HTC mounted a historic theatre display at the Regent Theatre as part of our 2007 "Mainly Main" tour. Photo by Gary Leonard.

Historic Theatres Committee (HTC)

Chair: Michael Zoldessy
 Vice Chair of Membership: Scott Benson
 Recorder: Beth Corets
 Last Remaining Seats Subcommittee Chair: Ken Gehrig
 Oral History Project Chair: Jan Wilson Morris
 Database Project Chair: Tom Sutherland

The Historic Theatres Committee works to foster awareness and appreciation of the historic theatres of Los Angeles County. Members are active in efforts to preserve historic theatres, collecting oral histories related to theatre history, and planning and coordinating the annual Last Remaining Seats series. The committee meets quarterly in historic theatres and other interesting locations. New chair Michael Zoldessy is a frequent contributor to the online theatre resource Cinema Treasures. He has been involved with the HTC for several years, as a longtime volunteer for Last Remaining Seats and most recently as HTC Vice Chair.

All volunteer committees welcome new members. Advocates are always needed to build awareness and appreciation for Modernism and historic theatres in Los Angeles.

Warmest congratulations to our volunteer leadership, and our sincere thanks to all of these volunteers for their hard work all year!



HTC chair, Michael Zoldessy.

Thanks for Going Above and Beyond in 2009!

In addition to membership support, the Conservancy relies on additional financial assistance throughout the year for specific projects, from educational tours to urgent action on advocacy issues. We'd like to express our heartfelt thanks to the foundations, companies, and individuals who provided much-needed sponsorship, underwriting, and in-kind donations for the range of efforts we undertook in 2009. Your generosity is critical to our ability to pursue our mission. There are too many of you to name in these pages; for a complete list, please visit laconservancy.org and click on "Join," then "Beyond Membership."

New Historic District Section at laconservancy.org

We are excited to announce a new section of our website dedicated to the historic districts of Los Angeles County. These new pages include important information about the process of creating local historic districts, how to respond to code violations in a Los Angeles Historic Preservation Overlay Zone, and the benefits of preserving these unique communities across the county. The highlight of the section is a Google map depicting more than fifty locally designated historic districts, with approximate boundaries, a brief description, and contacts for more information. Visit laconservancy.org/neighborhoods to start exploring the great historic neighborhoods of Los Angeles County. We hope you find this new resource helpful, and we welcome your feedback.

TASCHEN Fundraiser and Book Release Party for *Los Angeles, Portrait of a City*

On November 19, TASCHEN, Fendi, and Vanity Fair held a book release party for *Los Angeles, Portrait of a City*, edited by Jim Heimann. The event benefited the Conservancy and brought out nearly 450 people.



Benedikt Taschen speaking, with (from left): Jim Heimann, Diane Keaton, and Linda Dishman.

The fundraiser was held at the historic Cross Roads of the World in Hollywood (HCM #134). Designed by Robert V. Derrah and completed in 1936, the Streamline Moderne building resembles an ocean liner with surrounding cottage-style bungalows.

The Conservancy would like to thank TASCHEN, Fendi, and Vanity Fair for their generous support.



Conservancy staff at the historic Cross Roads of the World in Hollywood.

Photos © 2009 Martha Adams



The drive-in at the former Johnie's is alive with carhops again, ready to serve the community for decades to come. Photo by John Eng.

JOHNNIE'S continued from page 1

plans to reclaim the Googie landmark from the pile of debris left in the wake of its destruction. The Coalition to Rebuild the Broiler and the Conservancy worked closely with the City of Downey, Archeion Nevada architects, and preservation consultant Chattel Architecture to help ensure that the project preserved much of what remained while staying faithful to the original design. Schematic drawings for the new restaurant were based on the original blueprints by Harvey's architect Paul Clayton.

Although not an exact reconstruction of the original Broiler, the new building exhibits an attention to detail that is remarkable. The massive broiler neon sign was restored and sensitively adapted for its new moniker, with a vintage Big Boy statue purchased by Jim Louder on eBay and hauled down from Sacramento on a flatbed truck. Much of the historic terrazzo was retained, with new infill terrazzo selected to match the original; the rock walls were salvaged and meticulously rebuilt; and even the textured popcorn ceiling was reapplied to the reconstructed soffit. With Big Boy gleefully rotating on his former perch, Fat Boy is now enjoying retirement propped up next to the rebuilt canopy and basking in the glow of the Broiler's re-lit neon.

"Not only does this project restore a historic icon for our city and preserve a part of our legacy," beams former Downey Mayor Mario Guerra, "but it also provides tremendous benefits to the city from an economic development standpoint by creating a viable business venture that employs 185 people."

The Broiler's reopening is the culmination of years of grassroots advocacy, originating long before the illegal demolition. The Conservancy's Modern Committee was an early leader, helping to establish the Friends of Johnie's in 2002 and spearheading efforts to qualify the building for the California Register. In the wake of the Broiler's partial destruction, the Friends of Johnie's re-grouped as the Coalition to Rebuild the Broiler, forming an alliance of preservationists, vintage car enthusiasts, and students.

"The amazing story of resurrecting the Broiler is definitely one for the history books," muses Adriene Biondo. "A half-century later, the innovative Googie architecture and fabulous 1950s signage is again stopping traffic on Firestone Boulevard. What was old is new again, as families and a new generation of SoCal cruisers rediscover carhop service and experience a real 1958 drive-in."



Patrons enjoy the beautifully reconstructed interior of Bob's Big Boy with a photo of the original Harvey's Broiler as backdrop. Photo by John Eng.

SEPTEMBER 17 / NOVEMBER 10 MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The Los Angeles Conservancy would like to acknowledge the generous contributions of our new Supporting members, and the new and renewing members of our Sustaining, Benefactor, and Cornerstone groups.

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PCL Construction Services
Steinberg Architects
Nabih Youssef Associates

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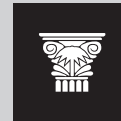
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 Benefactor (\$500)
 Cornerstone (\$1,000, \$2,500, \$5,000, \$10,000)

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Los Angeles Conservancy
Attn: Membership
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CONSERVANCY WALKING TOURS

Walking tours begin at 10 a.m. except where noted. Tours are \$5 for Conservancy members and children twelve and under; \$10 for the general public. Walk-ins are accepted on most tours. Pre-payment is required on Angelino Heights, Biltmore Hotel, and Broadway Historic Theatre District. For details and reservations, visit laconservancy.org or call (213) 623-2489.

WEEKLY TOURS

Art Deco

Every Saturday

Biltmore Hotel

Every Sunday, 2 p.m.

Broadway: Historic Theatre & Commercial District

Every Saturday

Historic Core

Every Saturday

BI-WEEKLY AND MONTHLY TOURS

Angelino Heights

First Saturday

Downtown Renaissance: Spring & Main

Second and Fourth Saturdays

Evolving Skyline

First and Third Saturdays

Union Station

Third Saturday

Youth, family, and group tours by arrangement; call the number above for information.



Los Angeles Conservancy

523 West Sixth Street, Suite 826

Los Angeles, California 90014

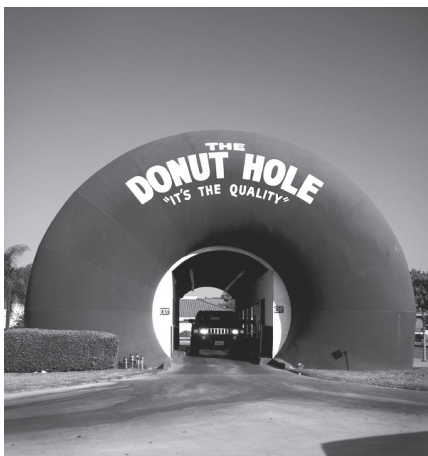
laconservancy.org

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UPCOMING EVENTS



MarcJ on Flickr



Michael Possert, Jr.



HAVE YOU VOTED YET?
The Sixties Turn 50 Website
laconservancy.org/sixties

**2010 PRESERVATION AWARD
NOMINATION DEADLINE**
Monday, February 1

SAVE THE DATE!
1960s Residential Tour
Sunday, March 14

Visit our website to vote for your favorite 1960s buildings, explore a timeline, learn about our sixties advocacy, view and share photos, find out about upcoming sixties-related events, and more!

We welcome nominations for outstanding preservation projects. Projects must have been completed by December 31, 2009 and be located in L.A. County. For details, see page 2 or visit laconservancy.org.

Mark your calendar for our big spring tour, highlighting a range of 1960s residential architecture. From Modernism to Hollywood Regency, L.A. has it all. For updates, see the next issue or join our E-News e-mail list.